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Uncovering perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion : a study of parents, students and teachers

Abstract

This study was done in an effort to identify hidden perspectives and attitudes held by parents, students, and teachers that may create a barrier to successful inclusion of students with special needs into education programs at one middle school. Surveys were distributed to randomly selected parents of special education students, parents of regular education students, special education students, regular education students, special education teachers, and regular education teachers at an intermediate school in Iowa. Results of the surveys were used to determine each group's positive and negative attitudes toward inclusion. The results of this study indicate that overall perspectives and attitudes about inclusive practices for special needs students were positive. However, certain barriers prevented inclusion from being fully welcomed. Barriers included a lack of collaboration time for teachers, a lack of training in serving special needs students, and a lack of willingness to accept change. These barriers were addressed in this paper within seven recommendations to include such changes as adopting the 12 characteristics of a successful inclusive school, allowing time for collaboration, and providing the proper inclusive training for teachers and staff.

UNCOVERING PERSPECTIVES AND ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION:

A STUDY OF PARENTS, STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

A Graduate Research Project

Submitted to the

Division of Middle Level Education

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

By

Rea-Eleene Woolley

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Titled: Uncovering Perspectives and Attitudes Toward Inclusion: A Study of Parents, Students and Teachers

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Abstract

This study was done in an effort to identify hidden perspectives and attitudes held by parents, students, and teachers that may create a barrier to successful inclusion of students with special needs into education programs at one middle school. Surveys were distributed to randomly selected parents of special education students, parents of regular education students, special education students, regular education students, special education teachers, and regular education teachers at an intermediate school in Iowa. Results of the surveys were used to determine each group's positive and negative attitudes toward inclusion.

The results of this study indicate that overall perspectives and attitudes about inclusive practices for special needs students were positive. However, certain barriers prevented inclusion from being fully welcomed. Barriers included a lack of collaboration time for teachers, a lack of training in serving special needs students, and a lack of willingness to accept change. These barriers were addressed in this paper within seven recommendations to include such changes as adopting the 12 characteristics of a successful inclusive school, allowing time for collaboration, and providing the proper inclusive training for teachers and staff.

Uncovering Perspectives and Attitudes Toward Inclusion: A Study of Parents, Students and Teachers

Chapter 1

Introduction

Passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL94-142) changed American education as it was once known and created new standards for parents, students, and teachers regarding education. Prior to these laws, students were most often segregated by ability, or disability. Now, to be in compliance with the law, schools must ensure that all students are included as much as possible. Subsequent reauthorizations of the bill in 1986, 1991, 1997, and 2004, now referred to as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, have continued to emphasize these new standards. This practice is now termed as inclusion, and it has become one of the most hotly debated issues in education. On one side are those in favor of a separate but equal education. On the other side are the full inclusion supporters. Both sides are made up of a mixture of parents, students, and teachers alike, but why are there two opposing sides? What perspectives and attitudes do these groups have toward inclusion? How do perspectives and attitudes differ among these groups? What changes do these groups suggest to make inclusion a success?

This research project attempted to uncover the basic perspectives and attitudes parents, students, and teachers have toward inclusion in the middle school. Attitudinal surveys were given to all three groups of stakeholders in an effort to discover where each found inclusion to be succeeding and, in turn, failing. To find what changes would improve inclusion in the middle school, space was provided for individuals to make suggestions or comments regarding inclusion.

Answers to the survey questions fluctuated among the groups. All groups had mixed feelings and attitudes about inclusion in the middle school. The reasoning behind their feelings differed greatly. Each survey revealed personal experiences defining the way inclusion was perceived. Suggested changes or comments consistently placed blame outside the subject's group. These results concur with previous research on perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion in the middle school.

In the last thirty years, schools in the United States have been presented with many changes and challenges. Perhaps one of the most significant changes for teachers, parents, and students across the country was the implementation of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Act, or IDEA. For the first time in the history of education, all students, regardless of the severity of their disability were entitled to a free, appropriate education as well as increased attention to parental involvement in programming (Lombardi & Woodrum, 2000). Over the years, the number of students served under this Act has increased greatly. The U.S.

Department of Education and Rehabilitative Services (2001) reports that the number of children served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act rose from 4,760,999 in 1990/1991 to 6,195,113 in 1999/2000. Teachers, parents, and students are presented with new roles in the education process; roles which are often blurred by confusion and frustration.

Perspectives and attitudes regarding inclusion were a focus and concern for research prior to the adoption of the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Shotel et al. reported in 1972 that one of the foremost problems in the inclusion of handicapped children was the regular teachers' attitudes toward the students with a disability (Brown & Sitarz, 1998; McLeskey & Waldron, 2002; Votz, Brazil, & Ford, 2001). The concern felt by all involved in the inclusion process has not disappeared over time.

The problem of negative attitudes toward inclusion rigorously affects all parents, students, and teachers involved in the process. Inclusion research indicates negative attitudes may be the greatest barrier to making inclusion a success (Stanviloff, 1994 & 1996; Wolpert, 1996; Cromwell, 1997; Kuester, 2000; Jelas, 2000; Cook, 2001; Hines, 2001). Attitude is a key variable in determining the success of inclusive education. Therefore, it becomes vital that all groups involved explore their own perspectives and attitudes to make inclusion work.

During the mid 1980s and early 1990s, a wealth of research was done to learn more about inclusion in the middle schools. Much of this research focused on attitudes on the subject of inclusion and the implementation of inclusion to

make it benefit all students. I discovered that much of the data regarding inclusion perspectives and implementation needs had not changed since the early 1980s. Attitudes remained the same, or worsened, and the suggested methods to make inclusion a success were unvarying (Cook, 2000). As a result, inclusion research in the last five years appears to have declined. In an ERIC search, thousands of articles prior to 2002 can be found by searching “inclusion or mainstreaming”, but that number reduces to the hundreds in the last four years. Many of the articles recently written quote documents from the mid to late 1990s. It is my hope this research study will spark a new interest and concern pertaining to the importance of perspectives and attitudes to make inclusion thrive for all students.

Research has shown that perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion vary depending on the specific responsibility of the individual. For example, in one study special education teachers were more positive about inclusive education than regular education teachers (Galis, Linscott, & Tanner, 1996). In another study conducted by Robertson and Valentine in 2002, parents of non-handicapped children expressed concern that there may be a reduction in time and attention their children will receive if children with handicaps are present in the same class. Some parents of students with disabilities expressed fear they would lose special-education services they had fought for and believed their children would be “dumped” into a regular classroom without appropriate support (Cromwell, 1997; Deloney & Tompkins, 2001). A 2001 study by Salend reported positive social gains for students with disabilities in the regular classroom, while other students

included have experiences of isolation and frustration (Hines, 2001). This range in perspectives regarding inclusion confirms the need for research to be done to relieve the fears and negativity each group may feel. Careful examination of inclusion-based education is clearly needed to allay the fears that invariably surround the practice of educating disabled students with their peers (Daniel & King, 1997).

Inclusion does not simply affect the school environment. True inclusion exists in all facets of life (Schleien & Heyne, 1997). Inclusive schools set an example for students' other areas of life. If negative perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion are adopted and maintained in the schools, what implications will this have for disabled children in the future?

Not all participants experience negative perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion. Many inclusion programs have produced positive outcomes. Farlow (1996) discussed a case study in which the peer assistant of an adolescent with Down syndrome was previously failing social studies, but after tutoring the student with the disability, the assistant's grades increased. In addition to academic gains, some studies (Mastropieri, M.S., & Scruggs, T.E., 2000; Staub, 1996) show a profound improvement in social acceptance. Staub and Peck (cited in Jones et al., 2002) reported that inclusion is crucial in creating increased social development while strengthening learning. The authors Staub and Peck (cited in Jones et al., 2002) also came to the conclusion that "the development of all children is enhanced by the extent to which they feel a sense of belonging, caring, and community in school" (p. 626). On surveys and in interviews, nondisabled

Defining of Terms

So that readers may have a common understanding of the terms used in this paper, the following terms have been defined:

Full-inclusion

The physical placement of students into the regular education classroom for the full extent of the school day, regardless of disability.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

An IEP is a legally binding document which outlines the educational goals of the student. The document identifies the modifications to be made by the regular education teacher(s) and the special education teacher(s).

Inclusion

The physical placement of students with disabilities in regular education classrooms for at least part of the school day.

Mainstreaming

A term that preceded “inclusion”, sometimes associated with the physical assimilation of students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers.

The primary responsibility of mainstreaming remains with their special education teacher.

Regular Education Students

Regular education students receive no special services. They have not been labeled as having any disability. No modifications to curriculum or instruction are required.

Resource Students

Students who are primarily placed in the regular education classroom, but receive at least one class period of special instruction from a special education teacher, typically in a class room used specifically for students with special needs from all grades. Resource students often receive a modified curriculum as described in their IEPs.

Self-Contained-Instruction Students (SCI)

SCI students remain in one classroom throughout the school day, as opposed to traveling from class to class for core class instruction such as reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. A modified curriculum for core instruction is taught by a special education teacher. SCI students may travel to exploratory classes.

Chapter 2

Methodology

This project was designed to identify the perspectives and attitudes parents, students, and teachers have toward inclusion of students with identified special needs in the regular education program and classrooms. The specific actions taken in the course of this research involved a review of literature and attitudinal survey.

This chapter will describe the participants of the survey, the selection of the participants, the survey used (see Appendix), and data collection and analysis procedures.

Participants

Participants in the study included a variety of Walton Intermediate teachers and staff, parents of Walton Intermediate students, regular education Walton Intermediate students, and special education Walton Intermediate students. Participation was done on a volunteer basis. (Walton is a pseudonym.)
School

This study was conducted in the unique environment of Walton Intermediate School in Iowa. Walton is a part of the Durndel Community School District, a pseudonym (DCSD). The school building houses kindergarten through 8th grade students. While the students at the elementary level and intermediate level are mostly separated, there are opportunities for some interaction throughout the school day. Students are bused from two other rural communities to Walton when they reach the 6th grade level. Several of the teachers instruct students from

more than one grade. The 2004 data compiled by the DCSD reported that Walton Intermediate School had 457 enrolled students and 37 teachers, resulting in 12.4 students averaged to each teacher. Special Education Services were supplied for 5% of the student population, or 21 of the 457 students.

Teachers

The purpose of the research was discussed with my school principal. With her permission and support, a cover letter, consent form, and survey were distributed to 23 regular education teachers and 5 special education teachers. Thirteen regular education teachers and 4 special education teachers completed and returned surveys, representing a 61% return rate. Responding teachers represented a variety of years of experience teaching and grade level or subject matter taught (See Appendix A)

Parents

Surveys were mailed to the parents of 25 special education students and 25 regular education students. The special education teachers provided names and addresses of special education students. Using alphabetical order, every other student was chosen. The school office provided a binder containing the names and addresses of regular education students. The binder was randomly opened to 25 different students. A cover letter (See Appendix B) explaining the purpose of the study, a definition of inclusion (See Appendix C), a consent form (See Appendix D), the survey (See Appendix E), and a self-addressed stamped envelope were mailed via U.S. Mail to the sampling of parents.

Students

After a discussion with the special education teachers, a decision was made that they, instead of the researcher, should distribute the surveys to the special education students. This decision was made after a discussion concerning the comfort of the subjects. Since the special education students did not know the researcher, the special education teachers felt that they would not participate. Prior to the survey, students were informed of the purpose of the survey and provided with a simple definition of the term inclusion. The special education teacher distributing the survey read this information to them from a script provided by the researcher. Assent letters and surveys were then distributed to and completed by all special education students. It is important to note that completion of the surveys were not a requirement, but a choice made by each student.

Regular education students were randomly chosen by grade. The researcher instructed the students of the purpose of the study and provided the same simple definition of inclusion prior to distributing the assent forms and surveys. Not all regular education students chose to complete the survey and were excused without consequence

All students were given the same survey. Student surveys were modified from parent and teacher surveys to account for comprehension of terms and concepts.

Research Questions

This research project attempted to answer three main questions:

- a. How is inclusion perceived by parents, students, and teachers at Walton Intermediate School?
- b. Which group(s) have the most positive attitudes toward inclusion?
- c. Which group(s) have the most negative attitudes toward inclusion?

Survey answers and personal comments made on the surveys were used to answer these questions. After a review of literature involving previous studies on inclusion, the specific research questions tested in this study were:

1. Special education teachers have positive perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion.
2. Regular education teachers have negative perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion.
3. Parents of inclusion students have positive perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion.
4. Parents of regular education students have positive perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion.
5. Students, regardless of placement, have a positive perspective and attitude toward inclusion.

Assumptions made in this study:

1. All participants in the study have a common understanding as to how inclusion is defined and implemented.

2. Participants in the study have a perception of and attitude toward inclusion.

Limitations of this study include:

1. The population of participants to be studied consisted solely of middle school aged students, and the parents and teachers of those students. Results may not necessarily represent the beliefs of parents, students, or teachers at the elementary school level housed in the same building.
2. The population of participants is from one rural Iowa middle school.
3. Parent, student, and teacher survey results are dependent on completion and return of the survey. Some recipients may not have felt obliged to respond.
4. Perspectives and attitudes are the only concepts measured by this study.

Measures / Instruments

Process

The process of creating a survey to measure perspectives and attitudes initiated with the review of other inclusion studies. Upon review of several survey items and results, the Galis (1996) questionnaire was chosen. This questionnaire had been piloted and used previously in order to find results similar to this research project. With the permission of Galis in an e-mail on April 16, 2002, selected questions along with demographic questions and space for comments were compiled into a two-page questionnaire.

Results of the surveys were entered onto a separate tally sheet as they were returned. This allowed for unproblematic data recovery.

Design of the Survey

The survey was drafted using a compilation of questions that would reflect how subjects perceived and felt about inclusion. The original draft of the survey consisted of thirty questions. After review the questions and estimating the time required to complete the survey, eleven questions were eliminated due to relevance to the study. Some of the eliminated questions were only applicable to teachers while others were too difficult to comprehend without explanation. The final surveys then contained 19 questions and space for demographic fill-in information or personal responses or recommendations.

Part I of the survey was set up on a 4-point Likert scale to establish “degree of agreement” with the statement made (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = agree; 4 = strongly agree). The Likert scale was chosen because it allows subjects to register the extent of their agreement or disagreement with a particular statement of an attitude, belief, or judgment (Tuckman, 1999). Part II of the survey dealt with specific demographic questions. This section varied depending upon to whom the survey was being given. Teachers were asked what subject(s) they taught, the grade(s) they taught, number of years they had been in the teaching profession, and to supply any comments or suggestions they had regarding inclusion. Parents were asked to explain any special services their child received, the age, grade, and gender of their child, and to supply any comments or suggestions. Students were asked if they are an SCI, resource, or no services student, their age, grade, and gender, and to make any comments or suggestions. Check lines were provided for most of these questions. Directions were provided

for both sections of the survey. This format was selected to make the process as “user-friendly” as possible.

Methodology Conclusion

This project will identify the perspectives and attitudes parents, students, and teachers have toward inclusion of students with identified special needs in the regular education program and classroom. The participants of this project will all be associated with the same middle school in Iowa. Data collection will be done through a survey asking both positive and negative questions regarding inclusion that measure the perspectives of the participants.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

In order to better understand the current perspectives of parents, students, and teachers, it was first necessary to review the results of previous research. This chapter will provide an overview of recent literature revealing the findings of other surveys and research. Respondent data is shown in tables and graphs. A breakdown of survey data will be reported in a series of tables and graphs later in this paper.

The Two Sides

Inclusion continues to be a hotly debated topic in the education community. The conflict involves two basic groups: parents, teachers, and administrators who support inclusion, and representatives of these groups who are against inclusion as an educational philosophy and practice (Aefsky, 1995; Lombardi, T. & Woodrum, D., 2000). These two opposing groups often voice concerns about the same inclusion issues, but view these issues very differently. Common topics of concern most frequently involve academic and social gains, the cost of special education, time, and class size. Jobe, Rust, and Brissie (1996), Leyser and Tappendorf (2001), and Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, and Wilde (2002), report that there are various reasons for positive and negative teacher attitudes toward inclusion.

Inclusion Support

Generally, advocates of inclusion argue the academic and social benefits for all children. Advocates contend that academic achievement is enhanced when

children with disabilities are expected to adhere to the higher standards that usually exist in the regular classroom setting (Daniel & King, 1997; Robertson & Valentine, 2002). Furthermore, Robertson & Valentine support conclusions made by Grider in 1995 that disabled students in the regular classroom will be more accepted by their peers, have balanced relationships, and gain more academic knowledge through small group and teacher instruction. A study by White, Swift, and Harman (1992) reported that 86% of parents felt their children made more academic progress in an inclusive setting and 52% said their child improved behaviorally. This parental opinion was reinforced by another study. Baker, Wang, and Walberg (1995) noted that special education students involved in inclusionary teams made small and moderate gains in academic and social settings. Furthermore, available research revealed no statistically significant effects on the academic or social outcomes of the regular education peers in the inclusion setting (Staub & Peck, 1995).

Supporters of inclusion also stress that the inclusion environment is more appropriately a reflection of a mainstream society and establishes a supportive, humane atmosphere for all students (Karagiannis, Stainback, & Stainback, 1996; Sapon-Shevin, 1994; Staub & Peck, 1995). Falvey, Givvner, and Kimm point out that "Inclusion is a way of life, a way of living together, based on a belief that each individual is valued and does belong"(as cited in Thousand & Villa, 1995). When schools exclude some students, prejudice is entrenched in the consciousness of many students when they become adults, with the result of

increased social conflict and dehumanizing competition (Karagiannis, Gasinback, & Stainback, 1996).

In addition to the academic and social issues, supporters of inclusion have many other arguments. Advocates imply that special education provided outside the regular education classroom is ineffective due to the high costs (Daniel & King, 1997; Deloney & Tompkins, 1995). Additionally, student potential is limited when labels are applied (Brown & Sitarz, 1998; Forest, Pearpoint, & Snow, 1992), students frequently endure long bus rides to locations housing special education programs; and the special education curriculum lacks continuity and flow (Deloney & Tompkins, 1995).

Inclusion Opposition

On the other side of the inclusion coin are the opponents of the concept. This is a difficult position. To oppose inclusion would seem to advocate exclusion. Yet, some observers maintain that full inclusion is not always the best way to meet student needs. Critics of full inclusion ask whether even students with the most severe disabilities benefit from placement in regular classrooms (Cromwell, 1997). Shanker (1996), writing for the American Federation of Teachers in “Where We Stand,” asserted,

What full inclusionists don’t see is that children with disabilities are individuals with differing needs; some benefit from inclusion and others do not. Full inclusionists don’t see that medically fragile children and children with severe behavioral disorders are more likely to be harmed than helped when they are placed in regular classrooms where teachers do not have the highly specialized training to deal with their needs (18).

Another common concern voiced by teachers and parents of non-disabled students is, “Will non-disabled children lose teacher time and attention?”

(Robertson & Valentine, 2002). Only a few studies have addressed this question (Staub, 1996). Skeptics of inclusion charge that, in an effort to make the inclusion classroom appropriate for all students, the more able children may experience boredom (Daniel & King, 1997). Hines (2001) included two studies on this topic in *Inclusion in Middle Schools*. Tiner (1995) surveyed 120 teachers from six middle schools in one Colorado school district and found that teachers were most concerned with ensuring that all students have an opportunity to learn. Some participants in the study voiced a concern that too much time was spent on special students and resulted in time taken away from others in the classroom.

Opponents of inclusion also assert that many local school boards, state departments of education, and legislators favor inclusion simply to reduce the costs of special education programs (Daniel & King, 1997). Agne (1998) suggests that politicians support the movement of inclusion because it is cheap. Their support makes them appear benevolent but allows them to move funding, for which education is in dire need, to more popular, vote-procuring issues. Conversely, inclusion advocates also indicate funding as a main argument for inclusion.

Some opponents fear that special education students will lose services they have fought so hard for and believe that children will be “dumped” into regular classrooms without appropriate support (Cromwell, 1997). Albert Shanker, writing for the American Federation of Teachers in 1996 stated,

"What full inclusionists don't see is that children with disabilities are individuals with differing needs; some benefit from inclusion and others do not. Full inclusionists don't see that medically fragile children and children with severe behavioral disorders are more likely to be harmed

than helped when they are placed in regular classrooms where teachers do not have the highly specialized training to deal with their needs.”

Special education professionals and parents alike are concerned that regular education teachers have neither the time, nor the expertise, to meet the children’s needs. In addition, with the shift of primary responsibility for the education of the child from special education teachers to regular classroom teacher, there is a fear of a loss of advocacy (Cromwell, 1997; Deloney & Tompkins, 1995).

What Prevents Inclusion From Being Successful?

Research has provided an endless amount of information describing what successful inclusion looks like. Experienced teachers make a point that mainstreaming can, and does, work (Stanviloff, 1996). However, many parents, students, and teacher still voice dissatisfaction with their experiences of inclusion (Cromwell, 1997; Shanker, 1996; Robertson & Valentine, 2002; Daniel & King, 1997; Tiner, 1995; Hines & Johnston, 1997). There are several barriers that prevent inclusion from being successful in some situations; however, a great deal of research rates the negative attitudes of parents, students, and teachers as being the leading cause of the failure of inclusion (Sutherland, 2001). These negative attitudes were a result of many factors and elements associated with the adoption of inclusion.

Parents

Parents sometimes have a feeling of not being welcomed by the school in which their child is enrolled (Robertson & Valentine, 2002). While they may be expecting negative attitudes and responses from others, these feeling may be a result of personality, different learning styles, or fears not expressed and dealt

with. Many parents report that special education teachers are not helpful in the inclusion process. Often, special education teachers were reported as problematic with “poor communication, cooperation, and liaison with regular education teachers (Wolpert, 1996). The advice from one mother of a ten-year-old student with Down’s syndrome is that “parents need to be patient with the school and with the teachers” (Berberich & Lang, 1995). In a study of 120 parents of Down’s syndrome students done by Wolpert (1996) many parents reported having problems with teacher attitude, while only two parents reported the teachers as not being competent to handle their child.

Students

In a study by Sutherland (2001), regular education students’ attitudes toward students with disabilities were lacking in cooperation during group work and in social situations. No amount of convincing or pleas to accept disabled students was able to change the attitudes of regular education students. Furthermore, the same study found that the two included students with special needs interviewed did not like to join into group activities as they felt intimidated by the regular education students. One of the subjects also felt that the teachers were not really aware of his problems and did not give him the help for which he thought he was entitled. He also said that the teachers became angry and spoke loudly to him when he could not understand the concepts they were presenting. In answer to the question of whether they enjoyed going to school, both said no, mainly because of the learning problems they both experienced (Sutherland, 2001).

Teachers

There are many factors involved in creating negative attitudes toward inclusion in teachers. The primary results of attitudinal research conducted by Mastropieri and Scruggs (2000) found that teachers agree in principle with the goals of inclusion, but many do not feel prepared to work in inclusive settings. Studies such as Voltz, Brazil, and Ford (2001) and McLeskey and Waldron (2002), report that the most important factor in building a positive attitude toward inclusion is a support system. In addition to the lack of training, large class sizes may also affect teachers' attitudes (Brown & Sitarz, 1998). Murphy (1996) found that teachers agree that their class size should be reduced to fewer than 20 students, if students are to be included. The study also reported that while almost all regular education teachers who had exceptional students in their classes did receive consultation, many fewer were provided relevant in-service training, classroom aides, or reduced class size. Finally, collaboration calls for a shift in control and the sharing of a learning environment, both concepts foreign to the traditionally trained teacher. Also, accepting new ideas about teaching, learning, and learning styles is called for and not always embraced by teachers (Hines, 2001). All of these components combined can create a great deal of teacher animosity toward inclusion.

Can Inclusion Ever Succeed?

With legislation supporting the practice of inclusion, the question, "Can inclusion succeed?" is immaterial. Research has provided an extensive list of suggestions elucidating successful inclusion.

Characteristics of Inclusive Schools

The sizable amount of research done on inclusion has facilitated the development of several characteristics of a school that has successfully implemented inclusion. The Working Forum on Inclusive Schools, a consortium of 10 national educational associations committed to providing information about a range of school inclusion issues, problems, and solutions, identified the following characteristics of inclusive schools in its 1994 report, *Creating Schools for All Our Students: What 12 Schools Have to Say*:

1. A sense of community. Within an inclusive school, everyone belongs, is accepted, and is supported by peers and adults in the school. This sense of community helps each child develop a sense of self-worth, pride in accomplishment, and mutual respect.
2. Leadership. Principals should play an active role in providing a great deal of support for parents, students, and teachers. It is crucial that he or she have a clear understanding of the rights of students with disabilities and their families and the responsibilities of school personnel.
3. High Standards. An inclusive school gives all children the opportunity to achieve high educational outcomes. Levels of achievement, instructional content, and the manner in which instruction is delivered reflect each student's needs.

A 2000 report by The Association for the Severely Handicapped (TASH), added that a high quality public education is the right of all

school-age children and youth, and high expectations must be maintained by all (*TASH Resolution on Inclusive Quality Education*, 2000).

4. Collaboration and Cooperation. An inclusive school encourages students and staff to support one another through collaborative arrangements such as peer tutoring, buddy-systems, cooperative learning, team teaching, co-teaching, and teacher-student assistance teams.
5. Changing Roles and Responsibilities. An inclusive school changes the old roles of teachers and school staff. Teachers lecture less and assist more, school psychologists work more closely with teachers in classrooms, and every person in the building is an active participant in the learning process.
6. Array of Services. An inclusive school offers an array of services – health, mental health, and social services – all coordinated with the educational staff.
7. Partnership with Parents. Parents are embraced as equal and essential partners in the education of their children. Limiting parental input to just signing an IEP is not responsible inclusion (Lombardi & Woodrum, 2000).
8. Flexible Learning Environments. Children in an inclusive school are not expected to move in lock steps, but rather follow their individual paths to learning. Groupings are flexible, and material is presented in

concrete, meaningful ways that emphasize participation. Although there is less reliance on programs that pull children out of classrooms, there are still opportunities for children to receive separate instruction if needed. This alleviates parental fear of losing valuable support received by a special needs student.

9. **Strategies Based on Research.** Research into how people learn is providing new ideas and strategies for teachers, and an inclusive school incorporates those ideas. Cooperative learning, curriculum adaptation, peer tutoring, direct instruction, reciprocal teaching, social skills training, and mastery learning are some of the practices that have emerged from the latest research and are applied in inclusive schools.
10. **New Forms of Accountability.** An inclusive school relies less on standardized tests, using new forms of accountability and assessment to make sure that each student is progressing towards his or her goal.

In one study, teachers thought that modifying the curriculum would give a much improved sense of learning success of the students, but sensitivity needs to be addressed in the light that students with disabilities do not like to be seen as different. The curriculum must display qualities or similar concepts as those used for regular education students (Sutherland, 2001).

11. **Access.** An inclusive school ensures that students are able to participate in school life by making necessary modifications to the

building and by making available appropriate technology that makes participation possible.

12. Continuing Professional Development. An inclusive school enables staff to design and obtain professional development on an ongoing basis so that there is continuous improvement in the knowledge and skills that they can employ to educate students.

Even with all twelve of these elements in place, success is not guaranteed in all schools. However, by attending to these issues, a more inclusive educational system is possible (Deloney & Tompkins, 1995).

Literature Review Conclusion

No single recipe for inclusion makes sense for all children in all school districts (Aefsky, 1995). Both opponents and proponents of inclusion can find scattered research to support their respective views, although current research is inconclusive (Hines, 2001). With positive attitudes, acceptance and caring, differences can be seen as opportunities for growth and cooperative challenges, rather than as problems. Inclusive teaching and learning will provide for each student's quality participation, development and interaction in their own education. All children have the right to learn, in their own way, in their own time (Berberich & Lang, 1995).

Chapter 4

Results

Parent, student, and teacher surveys were completed throughout the months of April, May, and June, 2002. Student and teacher surveys were returned expeditiously; however, due to the use of the U.S. mail, parent surveys required considerably more time and reminders. After receiving at least 35% of the distributed surveys, I began to analyze and chart the data.

Answers were charted into two categories: disagree and agree. Since “strongly disagree” or “strongly agree” are merely extensions of “disagree” and “agree,” these choices were grouped together. Results of these categories were then figured into percentages and charted in bar graphs. The analysis of the bar graphs was then charted in the two line graphs “Responses to ‘Positive’ Inclusion Statements” and “Responses to ‘Negative’ Inclusion Statements.” This allowed me to gain a firm understanding of the different perspectives and attitudes of each statement at a glance.

The nineteen statements were then divided by purpose. Some statements were designed to uncover positive attitudes, while others were designed to uncover negative attitudes. By agreeing with certain statements, attitudes were exposed. There were fourteen positive agreement response questions and five negative agreement response questions. Only agreement responses were charted into the line graph. This permitted me to uncover which group or groups had the most positive and negative responses. The groups in high agreement with the “positive inclusion statements” have a more positive perspective and attitude

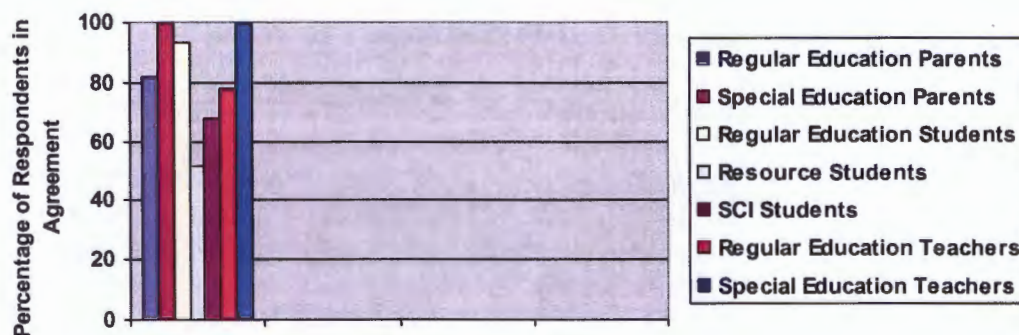
toward inclusion. The groups in high agreement with the “negative inclusion statements” have a more negative perspective and attitude toward inclusion.

Group responses were considered positive if more than 51% of the subjects were in agreement with a statement. The overall responses to the positive statements give cause to believe that those surveyed have an encouraging outlook toward inclusion at Walton Intermediate School. However, the responses to the negative statements are divided among the surveyed groups. The following is a detailed analysis of each statement.

Positive Statements

Fourteen of the possible nineteen statements were designed to evaluate positive perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion. Five of the statements assess an overall attitude of the subject, while other nine assess a perception of factors that cause negative and positive attitudes.

Statement #1 – The inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classroom can be beneficial to the other students in the class.

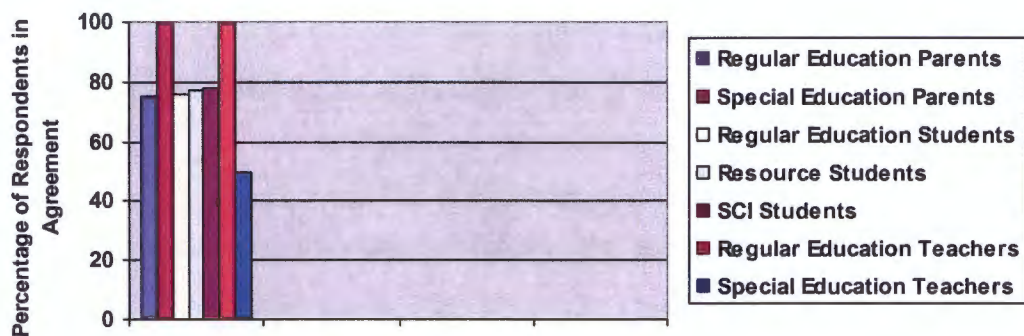


This statement was designed to provide an immediate attitude toward inclusion.

It indirectly evaluates the subject's feelings about inclusion. The statement

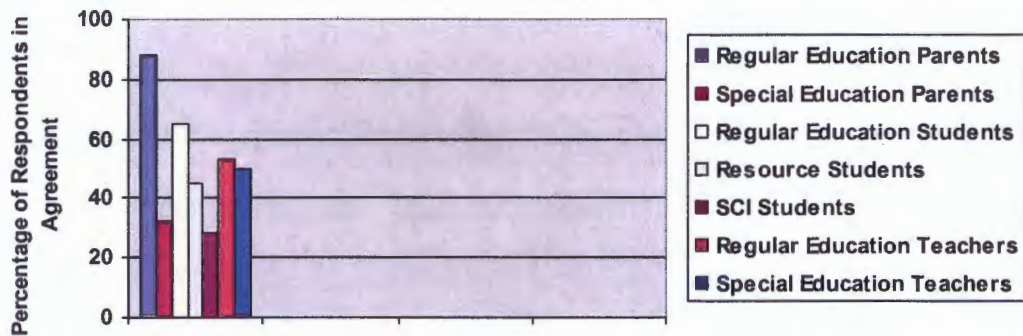
received 100% agreement from special education teachers while only 77% of regular education teachers agreed. SCI students were 66% agreeable, but only 29% of regular education students and 43% of resource students agreed.

Statement #2 – Inclusion of students with mild disabilities into regular classes is generally an effective strategy.



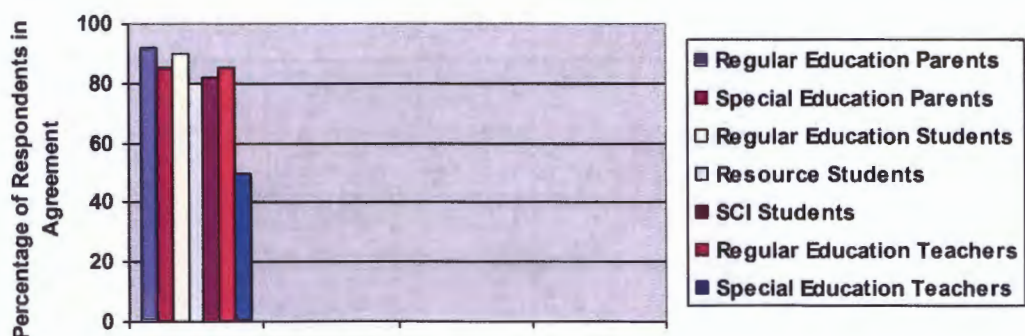
Similar to statement one, this statement provides a direct assessment of the respondents. An agreement response is an indicator that the subject views inclusion as being a positive element. Surprisingly, only 50% of special education teachers agreed with this statement, but 100% of regular education teachers were in agreement. Several teachers underlined the word “mild” on their survey, indicating that this word had been a determiner in their decision. All groups of students demonstrated 75% or more in agreement.

Statement #3 – Keeping academic expectations consistent for all students is important.



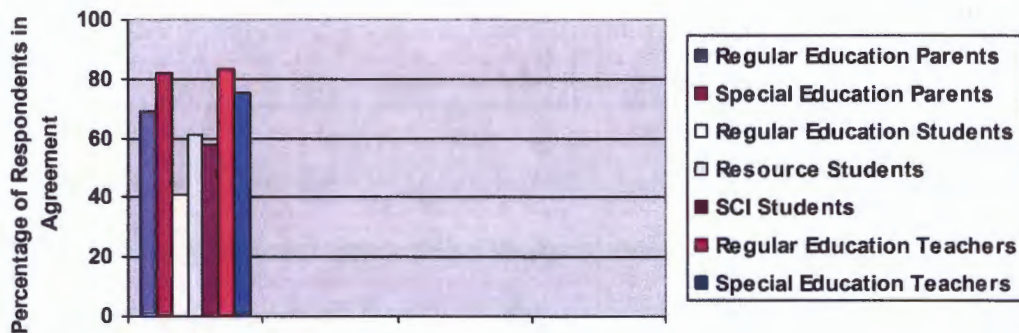
This statement was a measurement of the subjects' perspectives of the factor of academic achievement. While this statement may at first appear to be negative, true inclusion advocates believe that setting high expectations so that all students will meet the rules and academic challenges is vital to the success of inclusion (Kliewer, 1998). Fifty percent or more of all surveyed groups agreed with this statement. Regular education students were highest in agreement with 65%, while only 50% of special education teachers were in agreement.

Statement #4 – Keeping behavioral expectations the same for all students is important.



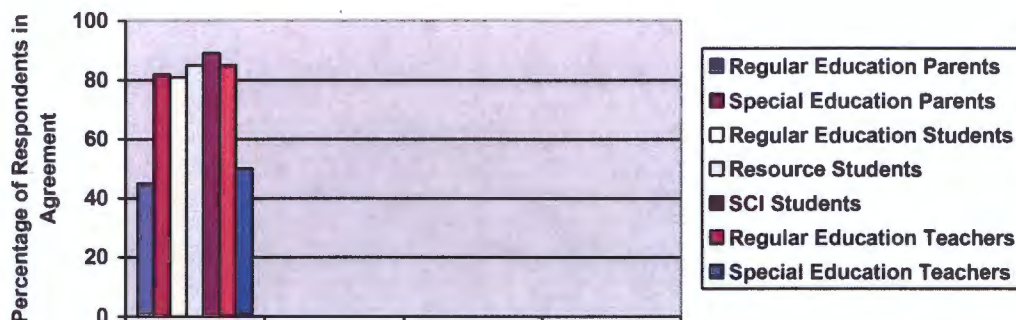
This statement was a measurement of the subjects' perspective toward behavioral expectations. All groups, with the exception of special education teachers, scored well above 50% for this statement. One special education teacher commented, "Some behaviors can't be expected of some students. One of my students can't keep his foot from tapping when he talks. While some teachers are lenient, others are constantly disciplining him. He is the exception to the rule."

Statement #5 – Maximum class size should be lowered when including students with disabilities.



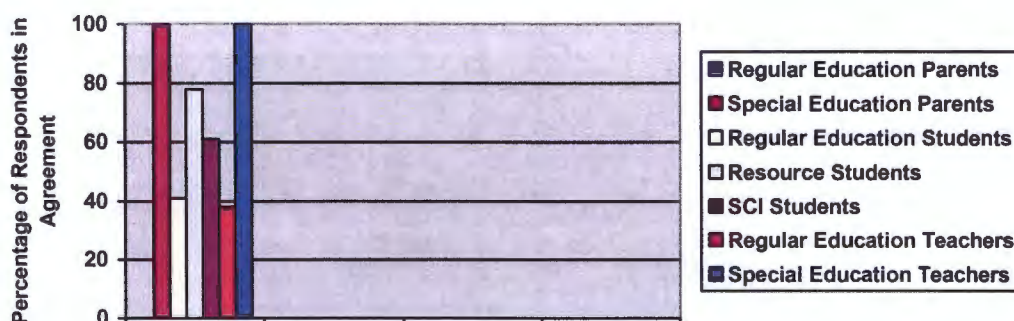
This statement assessed the subjects' perspective of class size, which has been found to create negative attitudes. Both groups of teachers were in over 75% agreement that class sizes should be lowered when including students with disabilities, which was not surprising. Students, however, presented surprising results. Both SCI and resource students were over 51% in agreement with this statement, but only 41% of regular education students agreed.

Statement #6 – Students' progress should be graded according to ability rather than only with standardized measures.



50% of the special education teachers agreed that students should be assessed by ability rather than standardized measures, while 77% of regular education teachers agreed with this statement.

Statement #7 – I have input into a program for students with disabilities who are placed in the regular classroom.

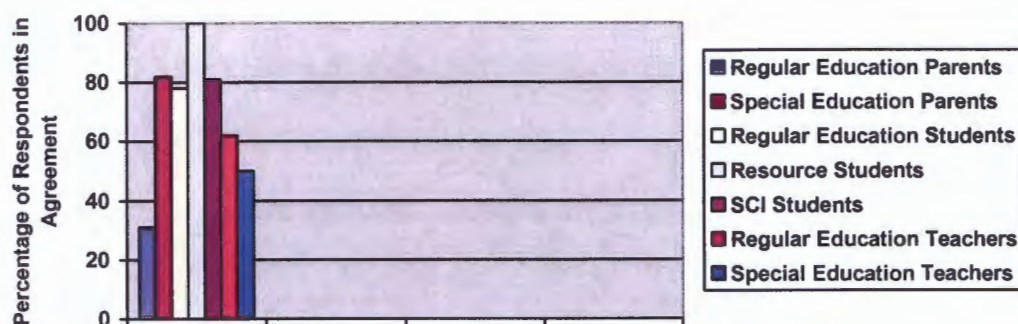


This statement evaluated the ways that the respondents viewed their input into special education programs. All special education teachers were in agreement with this statement, although SCI students and resource students, who all have an

IEP designed to meet their individual needs, were less than 50% in agreement.

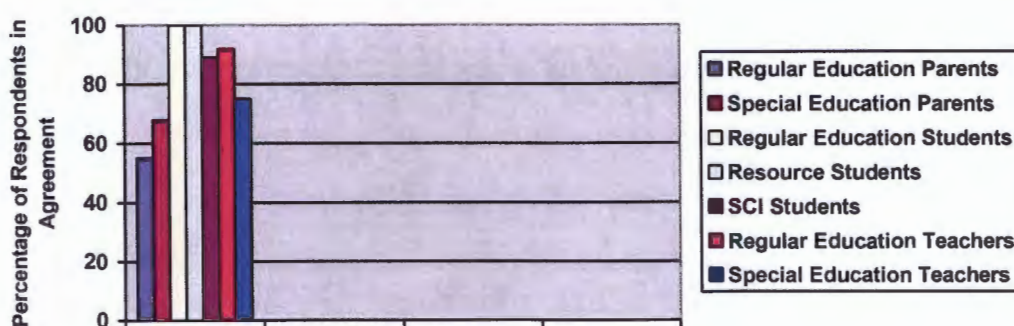
Regular education teachers and students were both below 40% agreement.

Statement #9 – Students should be served in regular classes regardless of disability.



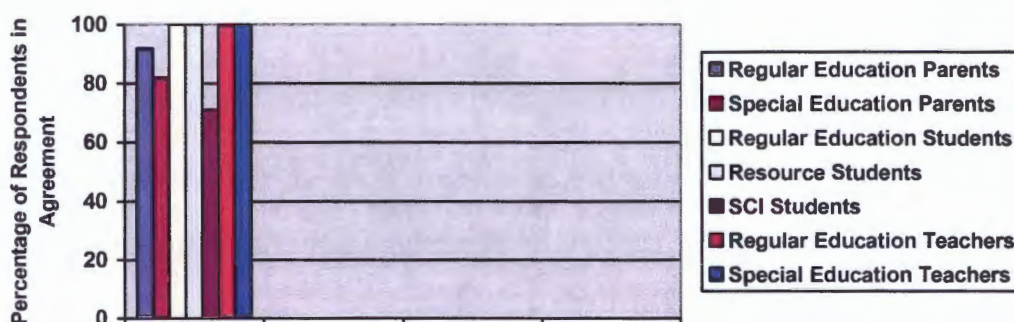
The statement was designed to evaluate information about attitudes toward full-inclusion. Not one teacher, special education or regular education, gave a positive response to this statement. All groups of students, however, gave positive responses. Over 75% of all student subjects were in agreement with 100% of resource students responding positively.

Statement #10 – The Durndel Community School District is a strong supporter of inclusive education.



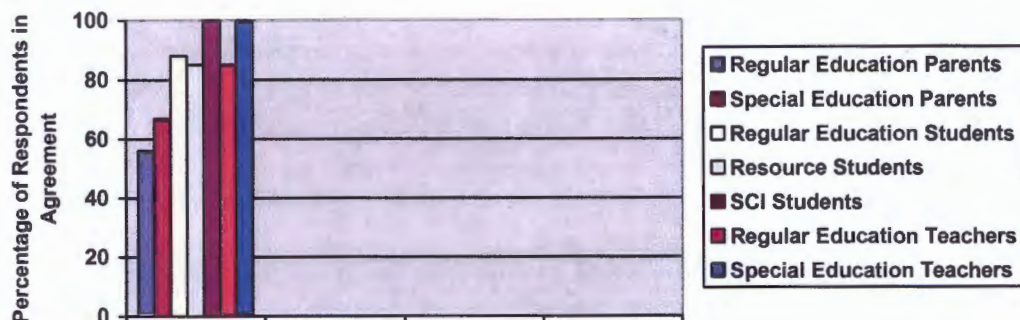
The response to this perception question regarding school district support was positive for all groups with 100% of regular education and resource students in agreement. With the exception of one special education teacher and one regular education teacher all teachers agreed with this statement. The one special education teacher commented, “The school district is very supportive of demanding inclusive education, but they are not willing to support the programs financially. They want something for nothing.”

Statement #11 – Special education provides a valuable service for students with disabilities.



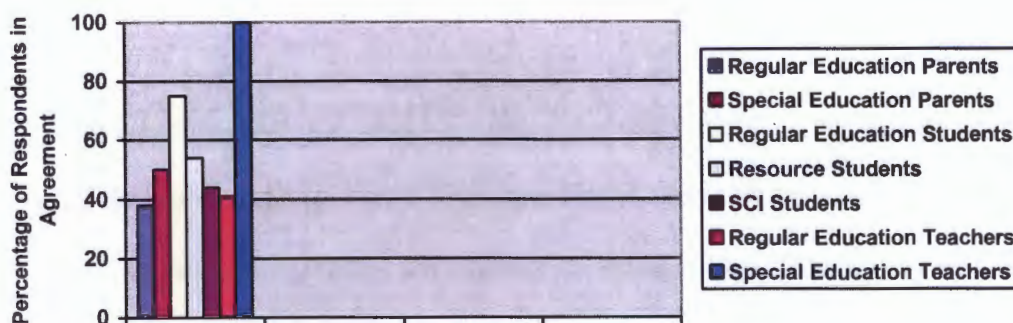
This attitude-based statement received a positive response from all groups, again obtaining 100% agreement from both groups of teachers and regular education and resource students. Parents of regular education students had a 91% positive response, while parents of special education students had an 81% positive response.

Statement #13 – The parents of students with disabilities are given the opportunity to provide valuable input into special education programs.



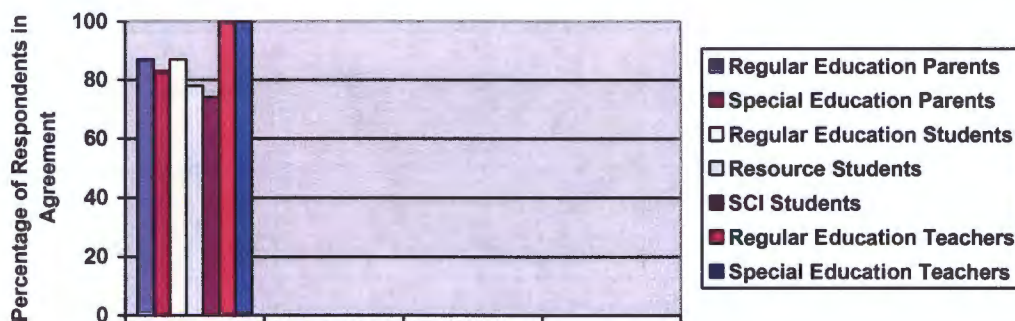
This statement was designed to assess subjects' attitudes. Parents of regular education students were 56% in agreement with this statement, while parents of special education students were 67% in agreement with this statement. 100% of special education teachers and 85% of regular education teachers were in agreement with this perception statement. In addition, all groups of students were over 75% in agreement.

Statement # 15 – Students should be grouped in ways that allow a wide variety of abilities in each class.



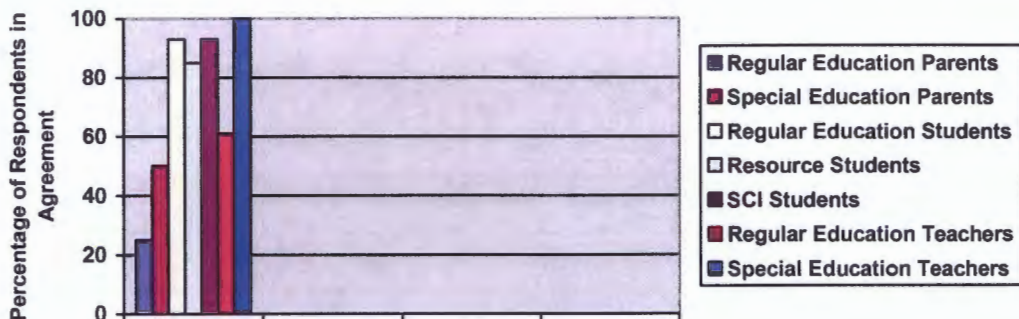
The setting of an inclusive school involves grouping students in a diverse fashion, which is what this statement reflected. This perception statement received positive recognition from special education and regular education teachers and resource students; however, resource students were in agreement at 54%. Forty-four percent of SCI students and 41% of regular education students positively responded to this statement.

Statement #16 – Slow learners should receive special help outside the regular classroom.



While this perception statement may at first appear negative, it is important that inclusion students maintain the opportunity to receive special services if necessary. Therefore, this statement evaluates positive perceptions. Both groups of teachers were in 100% agreement, and regular education students also agreed 87% with this statement. About 75% of SCI students and resource students agreed with this statement. One SCI student responded to this statement by commenting, "I just want to get out of here! I wish that I was with the regular kids all day instead of in this classroom with the same kids."

Statement #19 – The special education teacher, regular education teacher, and the students with disabilities all work together to best serve the needs of the students with disabilities.



This statement evaluates the perception of how the special education team works together. All student groups and both groups of teachers were over 60% in agreement with this statement. However, one regular education teacher commented,

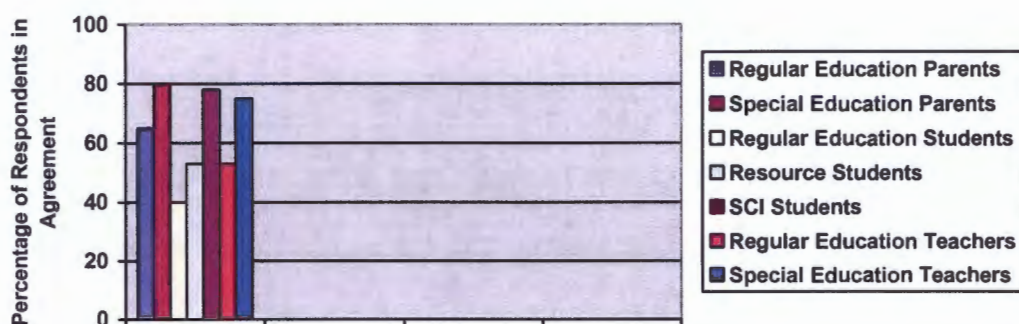
“I don’t get to go the IEP meeting, and I don’t get any help from the resource teacher. I do get to work very hard on my own to meet the goals everybody else sets for this child. Most of the time the student doesn’t even know what the IEP says, but, believe me, the parents know, and they watch and keep track to see if you are doing what they said you were going to do. I don’t call that ‘working together’ at all!”

Negative Statements

Five statements were designed to directly evaluate negative perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion. The first three statements assessed the perception of the participants regarding factors that affect attitudes, and the last two statements

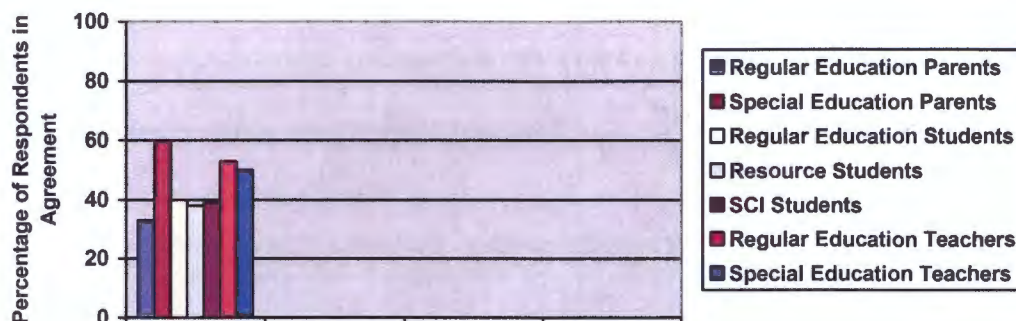
assess the overall attitudes of the surveyed subjects. Again, agreement to these five statements indicated a negative perception or attitude toward inclusion.

Statement #8 – It is the responsibility of the regular education teacher to make modifications for the students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment.



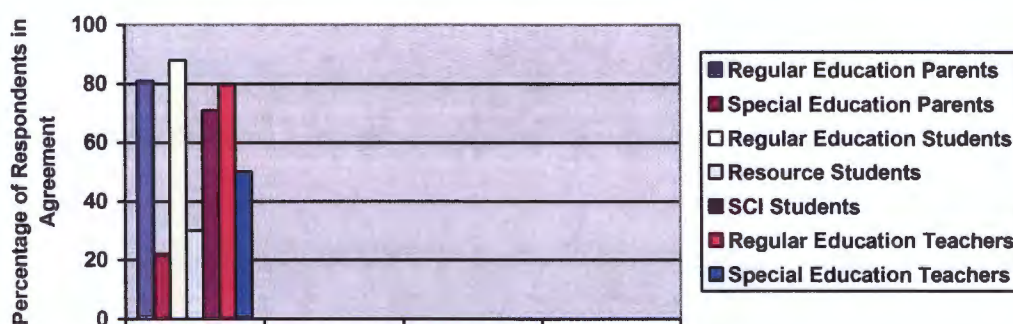
According to Cromwell (1997), inclusion should be the work of a team. This statement measures a perception that reflects a subtle attitude toward the teamwork required for inclusive education to work. Nearly 80% of SCI students and special education teachers, and more than 50% of regular education teachers and resource students agreed with this statement, which indicates a negative response. Both groups of parents had negative responses to this question with the parents of special education students responding with 80% negativity.

Statement #12 – In most cases, students should be grouped by ability.



In a true inclusion setting, all students should be diversely grouped. Thus, this statement evaluates the subjects' perspective of what a classroom should look like. Regular education teachers and SCI students felt that students should be grouped by ability. In addition, special education teachers were equally split at 50% agreement. Sixty percent of resource and regular education students disagreed with this statement.

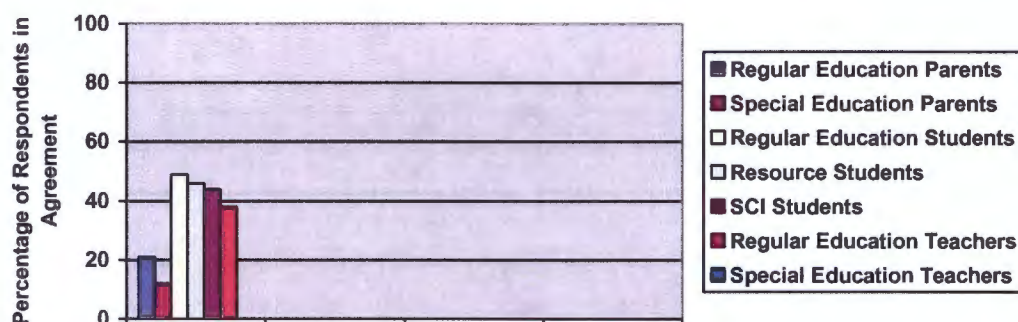
Statement #14 – Regular education teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with disabilities.



This statement was designed to evaluate the factor of time spent with students by the regular education teacher. All of the groups in this study, with the exception of 50% of the special education teachers, agreed that regular education teachers

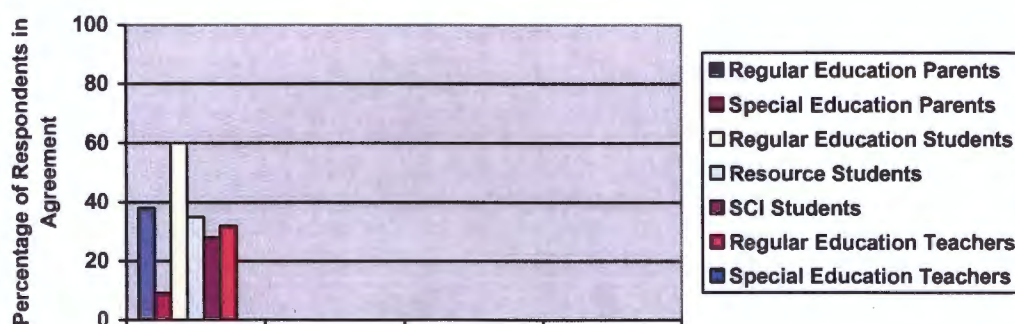
must spend more time instructing students with disabilities. Regular education students had the highest agreement rate with 88%

*Statement #17 – Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the students **with** a disability.*



This attitudinal statement received less than 50% agreement from regular education students, and 46% of resource students also agreed. The other three groups of subjects had notably low agreement percentage scores with less than 40% in agreement. Zero percent of the special education teachers agreed with this statement.

*Statement #18 – Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the students **without** a disability.*



Sixty percent of the regular education students were in agreement with this attitudinal statement. None of the special education teachers agreed with this statement, and the other groups were all at 40% agreement.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

Many of the findings from the survey analysis correspond with the findings of similar research studies. All of the groups reported having an overall positive attitude toward inclusion at some extent according to their responses to the attitudinal statements. However, all of the groups stated some degree of dissatisfaction with some of the statements about the factors that affect inclusion.

Conclusions

Attitudinal statements one and two, regarding the benefit of inclusion for all students, were widely accepted by all groups, with the exception of the regular education students' views of inclusion's benefits for them. These statements did not specify the degree of disability. However, statement #9, dealing with the concept of full-inclusion for students regardless of disability, was overwhelmingly met with a negative reaction by both groups of teachers. These responses demonstrate a possible acceptance of inclusion for mild or not obvious disabilities, but not an acceptance of the severely disabled. Cook (2001) found that teachers' perceptions of the severity of the disability influence the attitudes they hold toward their included students with disabilities.

While all the respondents were from the same school, their perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion varied. Special education teachers felt that it is the responsibility of the regular education teachers to make modifications for students. However, regular education teachers did not feel that it was their

responsibility. In fact, several respondents made specific, negative comments regarding this statement. These differing perspectives could cause animosity between the special education teacher and the regular education teacher, resulting in negative attitudes between the teachers, and with the parents and the students.

Another perspective factor that causes this researcher alarm is the amount of negative responses to team collaboration for the parents, students, and teachers. Remember, in order for inclusion to succeed, all of the school community must play an active role (Karagiannis, Sainback, & Stainback, 1996; Sapon-Shevin, 1994; Staub & Peck, 1995). However, in this study, only one special education teacher felt as though she had input into the program for students with disabilities who are placed in the regular classroom. This response is a definite barrier to the success of inclusion at Walton Intermediate School.

The final significant perspective barrier to a positive attitude is the amount of time regular education teachers must spend with students with disabilities. With the exception of special education parents and resource students, all other groups agreed between forty and eighty percent that regular education teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with disabilities. The respondents' agreement to this statement implies the perspective that more time is given to inclusion students than to regular education students. This could lead to feelings of resentment in both the regular education teachers and the regular education students, resulting in a negative attitude.

The respondents to the survey all appear to be willing to participate in an inclusive environment with the removal of just a few barriers. My initial

hypothesis in Chapter 1, stating special education teachers have positive perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion, was not always true. While their group did have the lowest amount of negative responses, they did not have the most positive responses. In fact, to my surprise, regular education teachers reported the most positive responses and a very low amount of negative responses.

Student results were also a surprise to me. While all three groups were generally positive toward inclusion, they did not rate the highest. Of the three groups of students, the regular education students responded most positively, while SCI students and resource students reported the lowest degree of inclusion approval in all of the groups. In fact, resource students displayed the most negative perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion. This did not support my hypothesis that all students have a positive perspective and attitude toward inclusion.

The final analysis of the surveys uncovered no conclusions that varied greatly from other similar research. The groups usually moved in the same direction, either toward agreement or disagreement, depending on the statement being measured. Most of the questions displayed a minimal level of percentage differences.

Recommendations

While the overall view of inclusion at Walton Intermediate School was positive, negative responses should be viewed as pertinent causes for concern.

Therefore, I make the following recommendations for the school community to consider in the implementation of a successful inclusion program:

1. School staff, parents, and students must adopt the 12 Characteristics of a Successful Inclusive School. (See Appendix F). These could be made into posters and distributed throughout the school.
2. School staff, parents and students must listen to and communicate with one another. While this seems elementary, many inclusion barriers could easily be removed by simply asking for help or sharing information. Furthermore, communicate positive accomplishments made by parents, students, and teachers in the quest for an inclusive environment instead of only making phone calls or sending e-mails for negative behavior or academic outcomes.
3. The school staff should organize and attend an inclusion forum. Voices need an ear if they are to be heard. The meetings could be held once a quarter for the community to hear about the successes made in the school. A section in the newsletter could be created to share victories and concerns. An immediate action could be as simple as providing links on the school's website to professional organizations' websites that support inclusion so facts and suggestions can be more easily accessible.
4. Make time for collaboration among the groups. All of the groups must make and take the time to work with everyone involved in the inclusion process. This might include information sharing and plan

development among the parents, students, and teachers or the inclusion of a regular education student into a special education tutoring program.

5. Establish a school inclusion philosophy. Sometimes individuals do not believe in something that can work because they do not know what to believe in. By allowing the whole school to participate in the development of a school philosophy, they gain ownership and power. The philosophy could be as simple as “All Students Learn Together” or “All Students Learn Here.”
6. Continue to evaluate the perspectives and attitudes of parents, students, and teachers. This continuance of evaluation will establish the importance and relevance of inclusion and remind the whole community what needs to be done in order for inclusion to be successful.

With these six recommendations in place, inclusion can become more successful at Walton Intermediate School. Attitudes already lean in a positive direction, and with these adjustments, more parents, students, and teachers would find inclusion beneficial. However, several changes are in order. Making just one change is not going to change the perspectives and attitudes of all the groups, which is what must be done since attitudes are contagious.

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Appendix A: Tables 1 – 3

Characteristics of Participating Teachers, Parents, and Students

TABLE 1: Characteristics of Participating Teachers and Classrooms

	Number of Teachers Reporting	%*
Gender		
Female	14	82
Male	3	18
Grade Level Taught		
Sixth	4	24
Seventh	1	6
Eighth	2	12
More than one Grade	10	59
Years of Teaching Experience		
1 – 10	6	35
11 – 20	5	29
21 – 30	5	29
31+	1	6
Subject Primarily Taught		
Industrial Technology	1	6
Special Education	4	24
Math	2	12
Reading	1	6
Language Arts Block	3	18
Science	1	6
Social Studies	1	6
Talented & Gifted	1	6
Music	1	6
English	2	12

* Due to percentage rounding, totals may or may not total 100%.

Table 2: Characteristics of Participating Parents

	Number of Parents Reporting	%*
Grade Level of Student		
Sixth	7	32%
Seventh	8	36%
Eighth	7	32%
More than one Grade	0	0%
Category of Student		
SCI	3	14%
Resource	6	27%
No Special Services	13	59%

Table 3: Characteristics of Participating Students

	Number of Students Reporting	%*
Grade Level of Student		
Sixth	13	28%
Seventh	21	45%
Eighth	13	28%
Category of Student		
SCI	17	36%
Resource	13	28%
No Special Services	17	36%

Appendix B: Parent and Teacher Letters

May 13, 2002

Dear Walton Intermediate Parent:

I am currently working toward my Master's Degree at the University of Northern Iowa with Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas on a research project to gather feedback about teacher parent, and student perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion.

As a language arts teacher in the Durndel Community School District for six years, I have become aware of the vast differences in the attitudes students parents, and teachers hold about inclusion. The answers to the survey questions I pose are relevant and of great interest to me. Your perspectives as parents play an integral role in the success of inclusion. It is my goal that this study may generate further research into inclusion and open doors to making the process of inclusion successful for all.

Your input is needed to provide a parent's perspective of the benefits and drawbacks inclusion may have to the educational process. It should not take more than twenty minutes to complete the survey. The completed survey may be mailed to Rea-Eleene Woolley in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Your name and the names of the students and teachers who respond will not be identified in my study. To assure the privacy of all involved, under no circumstances will I reveal the identity of the participants to either the school administration or the public.

I greatly appreciate your cooperation and support. Without you, I would not be able to conduct this research project regarding perspectives and attitudes about inclusion. When the study is completed, I can provide you with a description of the results.

If you have any further questions concerning this study, please call Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas at (319) 273-5880. You may also contact me at (563) 284-6253.

Sincerely,

Rea-Eleene Woolley

May 13, 2002

Dear Colleague:

I am currently working toward my Master's Degree at the University of Northern Iowa with Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas on a research project to gather feedback about teacher parent, and student perspectives and attitudes toward inclusion.

As a language arts teacher in the Durndel Community School District for six years, I have become aware of the vast differences in the attitudes students, parents, and teachers hold about inclusion. The answers to the survey questions I pose are relevant and of great interest to me. Your perspectives as teachers play an integral role in the success of inclusion. It is my goal that this study may generate further research into inclusion and open doors to making the process of inclusion successful for all.

Your input and expertise is needed to provide a teacher's perspective of the benefits and drawbacks inclusion may have to the educational process. It should not take more than twenty minutes to complete the survey. The completed survey may be mailed via school mail to Rea-Eleene Woolley at Walton Intermediate.

Your name and the names of the parents and students who respond will not be identified in my study. To assure the privacy of all involved, under no circumstances will I reveal the identity of the participants to either the school administration or the public.

I greatly appreciate your cooperation and support. Without you, I would not be able to conduct this research project regarding perspectives and attitudes about inclusion. When the study is completed, I can provide you with a description of the results.

If you have any further questions concerning this study, please call Dr. Donna Schumacher-Douglas at (319) 273-5880. You may also contact me at (563) 284-6253.

Sincerely,

Rea-Eleene Woolley

Appendix C: Community Definitions of Inclusion
for Use When Responding to Surveys

The following two definitions of the term ***inclusion*** have been provided in an attempt to offer a common knowledge to all participants in this survey.

What is *inclusion*?

1. Inclusion is a term that expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students).
–K. Schultz Stout as defined in “Special Education Inclusion”
2. Inclusion is bringing children with special needs into the regular classroom. Inclusion focuses on meeting the needs of all children in an educational social environment. This is done through what is taught, how material is taught, and activities used which include all children. All children participate and learn together by working together.
- Taken from “Inclusion – Making it a Success!”

Appendix D: Parent Consent and Student Assent Forms

Consent Form for Parent Surveys

I voluntarily and of my own free will consent to be a participant in the research project entitle “Uncovering Perspectives and Attitudes Toward Inclusion.” Rea-Eleene Woolley, a graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa and a language arts teacher for the Durndel Community School District, is conducting this research. I understand that the purpose of the research is to examine student, teacher, and parent perspectives and attitudes concerning inclusion with hopes of improving relationships and direction.

I understand that if I participate in the research study, I will be asked to complete a survey examining my attitudes and perspectives about inclusion. I have received an explanation of how inclusion is defined and have been given the opportunity to read this definition before completing the survey. All people participating in the survey will receive the same information. The survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. The completed surveys will be sent back to the researcher, Rea-Eleene Woolley, in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by May 23, 2002.

I understand that there will be no negative ramifications if I refuse to participate in this study. I have been assured that all of my answers will be kept entirely confidential and anonymous. My name will never appear on any research document, and no individual answers will be reported. Group findings will be reported in an effort to better the needs of students, parents, and teachers.

If I have any questions or concerns regarding this research project, I may contact the office of the Human Subject Coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, at (319) 273-2748.

I have read and understand this consent form. I hereby agree to participate in this project.

Signature of Participant

Date

Rea-Eleene Woolley

Assent Form for Student Surveys

I voluntarily and of my own free will agree to be a participant in the research project entitle "Uncovering Perspectives and Attitudes Toward Inclusion." Rea-Eleene Woolley, a graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa and a language arts teacher for the Durndel Community School District, is conducting this research. I understand that the purpose of the research is to examine student, teacher, and parent perspectives and attitudes concerning inclusion with hopes of improving relationships and direction.

I understand that if I participate in the research study, I will be asked to complete a survey examining my attitudes and perspectives about inclusion. I have received an explanation of how inclusion is defined and have been given the opportunity to read this definition before completing the survey. All people participating in the survey will receive the same information. The survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. The completed surveys will be sent back to the researcher, Rea-Eleene Woolley, in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by May 23, 2002.

I understand that there will be no negative ramifications if I refuse to participate in this study. Neither my name nor any information identifying me to my teacher will be requested or available on the survey. I have been assured that all of my answers will be kept entirely confidential and anonymous. My name will never appear on any research docum3ent, and no individual answers will be reported. Group findings will be reported in an effort to better the needs of students, parents, and teachers.

If I have any questions or concerns regarding this research project, I may contact the office of the Human Subject Coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, at (319) 273-2748.

I have read and understand this consent form. I hereby agree to participate in this project.

Signature of Participant

Date

Rea-Eleene Woolley

Appendix E: Parent, Student, Teacher Surveys

Perspectives and Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Parent Questionnaire

The following statements assess your perspectives and attitudes regarding a variety of aspects related to inclusion. Read each statement carefully and select the level that best describes your feelings.

The inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classroom can be beneficial to the other students in the class.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inclusion of students with mild disabilities into regular classes is generally an effective strategy.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Keeping academic expectations consistent for all students is important.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Keeping behavioral expectations the same for all students is important.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Maximum class size should be lowered when including students with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students' progress should be graded according to ability rather than only with standardized measures.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have input into a program of students with disabilities who are placed in the regular classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is the responsibility of the regular education teacher to make modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students should be served in regular classes regardless of disability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Davenport Community School District is a strong supporter of inclusive education.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Special education provides a valuable service for students with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In most cases, students should be grouped by ability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Parents of students with disabilities are given the opportunity to provide valuable input into special education programs.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Regular education teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students should be grouped in ways that allow a wide variety of abilities in each class.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Slow learners should receive special help outside the regular classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the students with a disability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the students without a disability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Special Education Teacher, Regular Education Teachers, Parents, and the students with disabilities all work together to best serve the needs of the student with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please check your position and provide the additional information.

I am the parent of:

☐ **SCI Student** ☐ **Resource Student** ☐ **No Services Student**

Age of student: _____

Current Academic Grade of Student: _____6 _____7 _____8

Gender of Student: ☐ Female ☐ Male

In the space provided below, please make at least one comment or suggestion of improvement you have?

Perspectives and Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Student Questionnaire

The following statements look at how you feel about inclusion. Read each statement carefully and choose the level that best describes your feelings.

It is better for other students when a student with a disability is in a regular classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is a good idea to include students with mild disabilities in the regular classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers should expect the same academic standards from all students.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Teachers should expect the same behavior from all students.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
If a class has disabled students in it, there should be fewer total students in the class.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The improvements students make should be judged by their ability to do the work, not just by correct answers.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I participate in a program of students with disabilities who are placed in the regular classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is the job of the regular education teacher to make changes for disabled students so that they succeed in the classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
No matter what, all students should be in a regular classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My school district supports inclusive education.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Special education is valuable for students with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In most cases, students should be grouped by ability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Parents of students with disabilities are given the opportunity to provide valuable input into special education programs.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

My teacher must spend a lot of time with special education students.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

There should be a variety of abilities in each class.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Slow learners should receive special help outside the regular classroom.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Inclusion of disability students in the regular classroom will hurt the education of the students **with** a disability.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Inclusion of disability students in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the students **without** a disability.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

The Special Education Teacher, Regular Education Teachers, Parents, and the Students with disabilities all work together to best serve the needs of the student with disabilities.

Strongly Disagree Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Please check your position and provide the additional information.

____ SCI Student ____ Resource Student ____ No Services Student

Age: ____

Current Academic Grade: ____ 6 ____ 7 ____ 8

Gender: ____ Female ____ Male School: _____

In the space provided below, please make at least one comment or suggestion of improvement you have?

Perspectives and Attitudes Toward Inclusion

Teacher Questionnaire

The following statements assess your perspectives and attitudes regarding a variety of aspects related to inclusion. Read each statement carefully and select the level that best describes your feelings.

The inclusion of students with disabilities into the regular classroom can be beneficial to the other students in the class.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inclusion of students with mild disabilities into regular classes is generally an effective strategy.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Keeping academic expectations consistent for all students is important.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Keeping behavioral expectations the same for all students is important.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Maximum class size should be lowered when including students with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students' progress should be graded according to ability rather than only with standardized measures.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have input into a program of students with disabilities who are placed in the regular classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It is the responsibility of the regular education teacher to make modifications for students who need adaptations to benefit from a particular instructional environment.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students should be served in regular classes regardless of disability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Durndel Community School District is a strong supporter of inclusive education.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Special education provides a valuable service for students with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In most cases, students should be grouped by ability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Parents of students with disabilities are given the opportunity to provide valuable input into special education programs.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Regular education teachers must spend a great deal of time with students with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Students should be grouped in ways that allow a wide variety of abilities in each class.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Slow learners should receive special help outside the regular classroom.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the students with a disability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inclusion in the regular classroom will hurt the educational progress of the students without a disability.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The Special Education Teacher, Regular Education Teachers, Parents, and the students with disabilities all work together to best serve the needs of the student with disabilities.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Please check your position and provide the additional information.

_____ **Special Education Teacher** _____ **Regular Education Teacher***

***Subject Taught:** _____

Grade or Grades Taught (check all that apply) _____ 6 _____ 7 _____ 8

Total number of years you have been in the teaching profession: _____

Current School: _____

In the space provided below, please make at least one comment or suggestion of improvement you have?

Appendix F: 12 Characteristics & Teacher Information Brochure

CAN INCLUSION EVER SUCCEED?

Characteristics of Successful Inclusive Schools

1. A sense of community
2. Leadership
3. High Standards – for all!
4. Collaboration and cooperation
5. Changing Roles & Responsibilities
6. Array of Services
7. Partnerships with Parents
8. Flexible Learning Environments
9. Strategies Based on Research
10. New Forms of Accountability
11. Access
12. Continuing Professional Development

-The Working Forum on Inclusive

“The question now being asked, is how can we do it, as opposed to should we do it.”

-Judith Heurmann,
U.S. Secretary of Special
Education and Rehabilitative
Services

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS:

References

The following as a list of helpful websites for parents, students, and teachers dedicated to making education work for all students:

1. Inclusion Press International –
<http://www.inclusion.com>
2. Institute for Community Inclusion –
<http://www.communityinclusion.org>
3. Renaissance Group Home Page –
<http://www.uni.edu/coe/inclusion>
4. The Inclusion Network –
<http://www.inclusion.org/>



WHAT THE LITERATURE SAYS ABOUT INCLUSION:

Advocates

- Academic & Social benefits for all students
- Disabled students are more accepted by their peers.
- More appropriately a reflection of a mainstream society.
- Establishes a supportive, humane society for all.
- Special education costs are very high.
- Students' potential is limited when labels are attached.
- Special education curriculum lacks continuation and flow.

Opponents

- Inclusion is just a way for schools to lower cost.
- Lost of special services – students are “dumped”
- Regular education teachers have neither the expertise nor the time to meet needs.
- Too much time is spent on the needs of the special education students only.
- Lack of support for teachers and students.

What Prevents Inclusion from Being Successful?

These negative attitudes are a result of a variety of factors:

For Parents:

***A feeling of not being welcome by the school.**

***They expect a negative attitude from teachers.**

For Students:

***Nondisabled students don't want to cooperate in group situation.**

***Disabled students feel intimidated.**

***Disabled students fear being ridiculed.**

For Teachers:

***They don't feel prepared**

***Classes are too large.**

***There isn't enough time to collaborate.**

***Legal issues.**